MODEL FOR PREPARING MARKETING 
AND BUSINESS TEACHERS TO MEET THE 
CHALLENGE OF CTSO LEADERSHIP 
AND ADVISEMENT 
Debbie Stanislawski 
Urs Haltinner

Abstract

Objective: This article presents a teacher education program graduates’ perceptions of their preparedness to take on roles as FBLA, DECA, and BPA advisers. Purpose: The purpose of the study was to better understand impacts that the model of teacher preparation had on participants’ confidence to perform their adviser roles. Method: A descriptive study was conducted using a web-based survey to collect data. Respondents included one-to six-year program graduates from a Midwestern teacher education program employed as marketing and/or business teachers. Results: The two most significant factors in the development of the respondents’ confidence to take on initial advisement responsibilities were found to be a designated course focusing on student organizations and co-advisement during student teaching. Conclusions: This study supports a model of providing the philosophical, historical, technical, and practical training to effectively integrate and advise a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). Implications: Implications for business teacher-education emerged and include: developing curriculum focused on adviser roles, promoting professional student organizations that focus teacher candidates on the adviser role, partnering with National FBLA, BPA and DECA and strategically placing student teachers in programs that include CTSO co-advisement opportunities.

Introduction

A significant responsibility has been placed on Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) to meet defined Career and Technical Education (CTE) program outcomes (Alfeld, Stone, Aragon, Hansen, Spindler, Romine, & Woo, 2007; Reese, 2003). Alfeld et al. (2007) listed leadership development, competitive events, professional development, and community service as the organizational elements that make up the contemporary CTSO.

Business and marketing teachers commonly utilize CTSOs as one strategy to facilitate civic engagement, practice employability skills, increase student self-efficacy, motivate academic achievement, and develop an awareness of their lifelong learning aspirations. CTSOs have the potential to facilitate learning experiences consistent with developing a technically, socially and emotionally intelligent work-force (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Association for Career and Technical Education, 2006).

Effectively integrating a CTSO requires CTE teachers to take on roles beyond that of a teacher (Alfeld, Stone, Aragon, Hansen, Spindler, Romine, & Woo, 2007; Reese, 2003). One such role is that of a student organization adviser. Advisers of student-run organizations require skills that link teaching with mentoring, guiding, leading, managing, and motivating students. Oftentimes these events occur in settings outside of the traditional school environment. Alfeld et al. (2007) indicate that 1.5 million students are being served by the eight U.S. Department of Education supported CTSOs. Within the United States FBLA, DECA and BPA are the recognized CTSOs related to business education. Given the prominence of business-focused CTSOs within the K-12 and post-secondary educational system, it becomes important to understand how teachers are prepared for their adviser roles.

The context of this study is a Midwestern university teacher education program’s design to prepare graduates to step into their CTSO advisement role. The Marketing Education program, since its inception in 1967, prepared Distributive Education teacher-coordinators to manage comprehensive high school programs. This approach emphasizes teacher candidate preparation to coordinate school-based, work-based, and co-curricular learning experiences. In 2003, the program changed its name to Marketing and Business Education (MBE) to better reflect the broad business curriculum for which it needed to prepare its graduates. The program emphasizes teacher-coordinator preparation around the historical vocational tenants of classroom teaching, co-op (cooperative occupational education), and facilitating a CTSO (Crawford & Meyer, 1972). The belief is that all three components are necessary to maximize student learning within quality CTE programs (Husted, Mason, & Adams, 2003). The teacher education program’s faculty continues to support this conceptual framework through a required core of professional education courses.

The emphasis on CTSOs is considered an equal component of the model used to prepare its graduates. Teacher candidates (students) entering the program are introduced to the concept of CTSOs through their program introduction course. By the end of the semester students are expected to conceptualize the comprehensive MBE program through an artifact called a Local Plan for Marketing and Business Education. The local plan requires that all teacher candidates illustrate a beginning understanding of the comprehensive PK-12 MBE program, its components, their connection to each other and the underlying theory. Describing the CTSO is a significant element of this artifact. Class lecture, discussion, and individual research of Marketing and Business Education focused CTSOs all contribute to the development of each students’ Local Plan for a Marketing and Business Education program.

A dedicated sophomore-level course, Supervision and Organization of Career and Technical Student Organizations, focuses on the theory and philosophy of CTSOs. The content includes the co-curricular purpose and desired goals of FBLA, BPA and DECA. In addition, students complete an in-depth study about the roles...
Review of the Literature

In order to understand the importance of preparing future CTSO advisers, a historical perspective provides a view of the value of student organizations. Early Vocational Education (Career and Technical Education) programs and their ensuing infrastructure essentially evolved around the pillars of core economics. Engaging youth in meaningful work and purposeful learning were valued (Prosser & Quigley, 1950; Droost, 1967). Career and technical student organizations were developed to enhance the vocational student’s high school experience. During the early 19th century social efficiency movement the comprehensive high school evolved and concurrently supported academic and a vocational aims for its learners (Barlow, 1970). Career and technical student organizations, historically known as VSO’s (Vocational Student Organizations), have been a critical part of a comprehensive Career and Technical Education program (CTE) philosophy since the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. Ensuing vocational education legislation continued to support student organizations. Formally, the George Barden Act of 1946 specified that vocational education funding allow support for VSOs. Currently, CTSOs remain an integral part of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Crawford and Meyer (1972) indicate that CTSOs “…proved to be a valuable means of providing vocational application of theories in the classroom” (p. 182). Also, social needs of career-focused youth in comprehensive CTE programs needed to be addressed in a manner that honored the developmental nature of entry-level employees while allowing them to take on their evolving roles. Berns (1996) writes “These early organizations provided students a vehicle by which they could engage in socially maturing activities to replace or supplement those often missed” (p. 5).

Career and technical student organizations share, as their purpose, the development of the whole student. Goals are generally articulated as the development of leadership skills, creating an enhanced vocational awareness and skill, connecting with the community in an effort to create civic awareness and responsibility, and evolving individuals that are socially connected through professional networking (Alfeld et al., 2007, McNally and Harvey, 2001). Examples of this include FBLA’s goal to “encourage members in the development of individual projects which contribute to the improvement of home, business and community” (FBLA, 1995) and DECA’s goal “to develop leadership characteristics” (DECA, 2005).

Current education reform demands academic rigor, successful transition of high school students into post high school education, and closing the achievement gaps across a culturally diverse youth population. Career and Technical Education is viewed by some as one means to holistic and sustainable PK-12 system reform (Castellano, Stringfield, & Stone, 2003; Lynch, 2003; Stone, & Aliaga, 2005). Within this context, business and marketing education must better understand its role relative to a reformed system. To sustain their relevance, business teacher educators have a responsibility to investigate their practices and processes that lead to highly competent teachers. While there is a wide and varied range of teacher education focused literature, much of it is focused on teaching strategies, technical content, teaching and learning technologies, and engaging diverse learners. There exists little research or discussion related to the preparation of future business and marketing teachers for the roles and responsibilities of CTSO advisement.
The Study

Research Purpose and Questions

1. The purpose of the study was to understand impacts that the model of teacher preparation had on participants’ confidence to perform their adviser roles. To achieve this goal, the following questions guided the research:

2. To what extent do graduates of the Midwestern teacher education program attribute their confidence to perform their student organization advisement role to the program’s academic coursework?

3. To what extent do graduates of the Midwestern teacher education program attribute their confidence to perform their student organization advisement role to the program’s capstone student teaching experience?

4. To what extent do graduates of the Midwestern teacher education program attribute their confidence to perform their student organization advisement role to their professional student organization experiences?

Procedures

Participants were chosen from a comprehensive program graduate list obtained from the university’s alumni association. All program alumni with valid addresses who graduated after 2000 were identified. From that list, only those graduates currently teaching were selected for inclusion in the study. Next, e-mail addresses for the participants were obtained by using web searches and available DECA and BPA directories. The sample included all 83 graduates who are currently teaching.

A web-based survey was utilized for the data collection. Ten questions were developed by the researchers with the aim of examining three key areas of the preparation model used at the university. The key areas included (1) coursework specific to the advisement role and student organization mission, (2) involvement in a program specific student organization (CTSO), and (3) an experiential component through student teaching. While some questions were designed to report demographic findings, most questions were designed based on a six-point scale. The scale ranged from 1 (significantly) to 6 (not at all). The research study also provided subjects with two open-ended questions designed to collect qualitative responses. Thematic analysis was used to synthesize answers to open-ended questions.

An e-mail that announced the study was sent to the sample prior to the distribution of the survey. One week later, an e-mail was sent that included information on how to complete the survey, the goal of the research, and how to opt out of future e-mails regarding the research study. Thirty-four participants responded to the first e-mail by completing the survey. A follow-up e-mail was sent one week later, which resulted in an additional 10 responses. A total of 45 usable responses were received within the two weeks allotted to data collection, for a response rate of 54 percent. One survey was returned unusable.

Results

Program graduates’ confidence to take on their role as advisers was measured by questions categorized into three areas: coursework specific to the advisement role and student organization mission, involvement in the program specific student organization, and an experiential component through student teaching. In addition, thematic analysis of open-ended questions highlighted specific areas that graduates felt most competent in and additional perceptions about their preparation for their adviser roles. The study targeted subjects that assumed the role of supervising student organizations. Almost 76 percent reported that they advised DECA chapters and 24.4 percent advised FBLA Chapters. Respondents could choose more than one selection. Therefore, it was possible that subjects reported overlapping advisement responsibilities. In addition, a small number of subjects selected the “other” response option indicating that they advised or advise Business Professionals of America (BPA) or Delta Epsilon Chi (DEX).

Coursework Specific to the Advisement Role and Student Organization Mission

Respondents were split between somewhat (33.3%) and somewhat significantly (33.3%) when rating the degree that the course, Supervision of Career and Technical Student Organizations, contributed to their confidence to take on their adviser role. Their data are presented in Table 1. Overall, 73.3 percent of the total respondents reported that, in some way, the course contributed to their confidence to serve as a student organization adviser. Less than 9 percent selected the neutral response and 15.6 percent reported that the course did not significantly impact their confidence.

Table 1. Supervision of Student Organization Course Contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significantly</th>
<th>Somewhat significantly</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not in a significant way</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree did the Supervision of Student Organisations degree help you develop confidence to take on your adviser role after graduation?</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Involvement in Program Specific Student Organization

Within the participants’ university program, the Marketing and Business Education Association (MBEA) is the professional student organization that serves the
major. MBEA was previously called Collegiate DECA. Currently, the organization has affiliations with both National DECA and PBL (Phi Beta Lambda). Respondents indicated that participation in the student organization helped them develop confidence to take on their CTSO adviser role. As shown in Table 2, more than 66 percent of respondents reported that their involvement contributed to their confidence level. Over 51 percent of respondents indicated that participation enhanced their confidence somewhat or somewhat significantly. An additional 15.6 percent identified that this was a significant factor. Fifteen of 45 respondents rated this factor within the lowest three rankings.

Table 2.
**Involvement in Program Specific Professional Student Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significantly</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not in a</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree did you participate in UW-Stout DECA or MBEA help you develop confidence to take on your CTSO adviser role in your present position?</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree did participating or running a DECA District level conference while a student at UW-Stout prepare you for your adviser role?</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the professional student organization experience respondents were responsible for planning, managing, and running a DECA conference. When asked to what degree that experience prepared them for their adviser role, 46.2 percent rated it as somewhat significantly (see Table 2). Over 92 percent of all respondents indicated responses in the somewhat through significant range.

**Experiential Component through Student Teaching**

Forty-four of the 45 respondents reported co-advising a CTSO during their student teaching experience. As Table 3 illustrates, over 43 percent credited that experience as a major factor in developing their confidence to perform the advisement role. Over 95 percent of all respondents credited this experience by rating it within the three highest response ranges.

![Table 3. CTSO Co-Advising During Student Teaching Contribution](image)

**Qualitative Feedback**

Respondents were prompted, through an open-ended question, to reflect on their first few years as a teacher. They were asked to share aspects of the adviser responsibilities they perceived to be most competent in performing. Respondents reported understanding technical aspects of their CTSO such as organizing and running a chapter and motivating students to participate. They further indicated competence during off-campus and overnight excursions with their chapters. Respondents reported that they were aware of, and expected, the additional time and effort that a CTE teacher expends in advising an active CTSO chapter.

A second open-ended question invited participants to provide additional comments or experiences that contributed to their preparation to advise a student organization. Several themes emerged. Theme One indicated that respondents were confident in knowledge related to history, philosophy, and technical aspects of advising CTSOs. Theme Two highlighted the incorporation of CTSO co-advising opportunities and experiences during student teaching as powerful elements contributing to their confidence. Theme Three supports the value of involvement in the collegiate professional student organization. Specifically, experiencing local, district, state, regional, and national conferences was valued as a way to develop competence in CTSO advisement. Theme Four revolved around experiences beyond those provided through the program curriculum. These included participation in a CTSO as a high school student and leadership experience outside of teacher education. It was reported that being active in student government and experiencing leadership and management duties within part-time or fulltime work contributed to confidence in taking on extended student organization adviser responsibilities. Some subjects reported that these experiences allowed them to be competent beyond their peers with similar roles.

**Discussion**

By using a three-pronged model for preparing teachers, teacher candidates were prepared for their role as advisers. The study helps identify the links between classroom, student organization, and work-based learning experiences emphasized in
career and technical education and teacher preparation (Husted et al., 2003). The balance and relationship between theory and practice is critical in developing a teacher that can continue to grow as a teacher and inspirer (Dewey, 1962). Application of theories taught in the classroom can be applied through CTSO competitive events. Pre-service teachers should understand the theory behind CTSOs before exercising their adviser roles.

The complexity of becoming a confident and competent student organization adviser presented itself through the quantitative and qualitative responses. The findings demonstrate that there is not one clear point of learning or experience that presents itself as the critical factor. This suggests that a multitude of experiences are necessary. Respondents did perceive gaining more of their confidence from authentic experiences than from the theoretical CTSO specific course. However, it is not known to what extent the course may have provided the beginning knowledge required to succeed within the experiential components.

This study also demonstrates that expectations for professional student organization participation as part of the teacher: education experience can have a positive impact on CTSO adviser confidence. Emulating such an organization within the university/college can provide teaching candidates an entry point into ongoing professional development. In addition, leadership and management structures that result through such an organization can model and teach skills needed to be successful as a CTSO adviser.

Within CTE there exists an opportunity for national CTSO leadership to formally support teacher education programs in preparing teacher candidates to step into their roles as competent advisers. Traditionally, CTSO adviser resources are made available to teacher education programs. In addition, program students are occasionally given the opportunity to assist at regional and state conferences. However, the extent to which pre-service teachers encounter these experiences may be a function of teacher education faculty understanding, beliefs, experiences and connections to CTSOs. There exists an opportunity to create a pedagogical connection between National CTSO leaders and teacher education programs relative to the preparation of competent advisers. Teacher candidates could be supported through a CTSO adviser learning experience provided through CTSO led seminars, conferences, and experiences that move pre-service teachers into their adviser roles.

It is also important to rethink student teaching placements relative to extending experiences beyond classroom-centered roles. In the case of a CTE student teacher placement, placing teacher candidates in programs that have successful CTSO chapters will provide a model for the student teacher. When possible, structuring the experience in a way that student teachers take on a co-adviser role can help teacher candidates develop confidence for their future roles.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. One limitation was the number of respondents. The study focused on the graduates of only one program. Also, the study did not include outside stakeholders’ perceptions of the preparedness or performance of the participants. Another limitation was the descriptive nature of the study. This methodology does not look in depth through observations of actual performance.

Conclusion

Advising student organizations is complex and involves both knowledge of theory and the ability to make practical day to day decisions. Within educational reform, student organizations have the potential to add value to academic preparation. It becomes increasingly important to identify how to best prepare prospective CTE teachers to understand the role, purpose, and goals of their disciplines. This study supports one model of providing the philosophical, historical, technical, and logistical training to effectively integrate and advise a CTSO. The model utilizes an approach that includes classroom teaching preparation, co-op coordination (cooperative occupational education), and facilitating a CTSO (Crawford & Meyer, 1972). Participants of this study believe that the program utilizing this model contributed towards their confidence to take on roles as advisers.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study examined perceptions of the extent that graduates of a Midwestern teacher education program attributed their confidence to perform their student organization advisement role to their academic preparation. Therefore, future research in the following areas is recommended:

1. Examine administrators’ perceptions of graduates’ preparedness to perform their student organization advisement role.
2. Replicate this study with other business education graduates from universities throughout the United States.
3. Examine graduates’ perceptions of preparedness to perform their student organization advisement role beyond business education and throughout career and technical disciplines.

References

Criteria for Selection of Articles for the Delta Pi Epsilon Journal

The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal publishes articles that build the knowledge base for both business and education and that relay ways the two reinforce each other. Articles reporting sound quantitative or qualitative research are selected for publication.

Manuscript reviews for this refereed publication occur on a continual basis, so you are welcome to submit manuscripts at any time.

All manuscripts must be:

1. research-based and contain actual research data to support findings and conclusions.
2. reliable, generalizable and provide content of interest to business educators.
3. sufficiently well written to require minimal editing and revision.
4. 2,000 to 5,000 words in length.

Specific Procedures for Preparing a Manuscript for the Delta Pi Epsilon Journal

a. Use the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition in preparing the manuscript.

b. Include a title page and a structured abstract (maximum 150 words) with the manuscript. Your name and affiliation should appear on the Title Page only.

c. Attach human subjects approval to the manuscript when required by your institution.

d. Include a brief biographical statement for each author. Include titles (e.g., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss); full names; position titles; phone numbers; places of employment; and cities, states, and zip codes. If appropriate, include an acknowledgment statement for agencies that assisted with authorship or research funding.

e. Conclude research manuscripts with a section that discusses the findings and how they contribute to the body of knowledge in the area being investigated. Also, provide recommendations for further research that would build upon and complement this study. Limit tables and other visuals to those that can be easily presented on the relatively small pages of this journal.

f. Use MS Word to prepare the document with 12-point Times New Roman, double line spacing, and one-inch margins.

g. Carefully proofread the manuscript and submit original materials, not under consideration or published elsewhere, exclusively to The DPE Journal.

h. Send one hard copy and an electronic copy of the manuscript, including the title page and abstract to the editor:

Dr. Diane Fisher, Editor
The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal
Department of Technology Education
University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive, Box 5036
Hattiesburg, MS 39406
(601)266-4666
Email: diane.fisher@usm.edu

The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal